

Tree Preservation

Planning Commission
Presentation

January 17, 2007

Background

- ◆ A year ago, staff brought this issues to the Planning Commission for discussion
- ◆ Issue was tabled while staff addressed other work program items
- ◆ Director's Rule formalized some tree retention measures in the last year
- ◆ Tonight's focus is on tree preservation, but there are many related issues that need to be addressed in the code: landscaping, grading, and vegetation management

Tree Preservation Issues

Established Neighborhoods:

- ◆ Maintenance of existing trees, is a big concern
- ◆ Residents most likely to desire fewer regulations for removal

Developing Neighborhoods:

- ◆ Removal of trees, especially on larger lots, is a big concern
- ◆ Residents most likely to desire strict regulations for removal

Why Retain Trees?

◆ No Retained Trees



◆ Retained Trees



Tree retention: preserves natural drainage features, prevents erosion, provides habitat, insulates against wind and sun, buffers noise, reduces pollution, and is aesthetically pleasing.

Why Remove Trees?

Tree Removal:
prevents hazards,
enhances views,
makes
development
easier, is an
aesthetic
preference,
protects property
rights, and avoids
messes or
nuisances from
dropped fruit,
leaves, needles.



Comprehensive Plan Policies

- ◆ **Objective CD-A** is to preserve the City's unique natural features
- ◆ Policy CD-1 instructs the City to integrate development around natural areas including notable stands of trees
- ◆ Policy CD-5 emphasizes the importance of creating Native Growth Protection Areas
- ◆ **Objective CD-F** promotes the protection of views by policy and through development standards

Comprehensive Plan Policies

- ◆ Objectives CD-J and CD-K encourage landscape plans city-wide and for new site plans
- ◆ Policy CD-45 states that existing, mature vegetation and distinctive trees should be retained
- ◆ Policy CD-46 requires that significant views be accounted for in early development stages, to prevent future removal of view-blocking trees
- ◆ Policy CD-50 states that trees should be used as landscaping and retained whenever possible

Comprehensive Plan Policies

- ◆ **Objective EN-F** instructs the City to conduct a stormwater management program that optimizes City resources
- ◆ Policy EN-24 encourages the maintenance and enhancement of natural drainage systems
- ◆ Policy EN-31 states that natural features should be protected whenever feasible in the implementation of surface water management systems

RMC Tree Regulations

- ◆ Trees, regardless of size, are treated similarly
- ◆ Only requires retention of trees in critical areas and buffers and native growth protection areas
- ◆ The internal area created by the perimeter setbacks is considered the land clearing line
- ◆ Allows tree removal for: emergencies, diseased trees, utility and road expansion, and commercial nurseries and agriculture
- ◆ Allows minor tree cutting activities, with lots under ½ acre exempt from all requirements

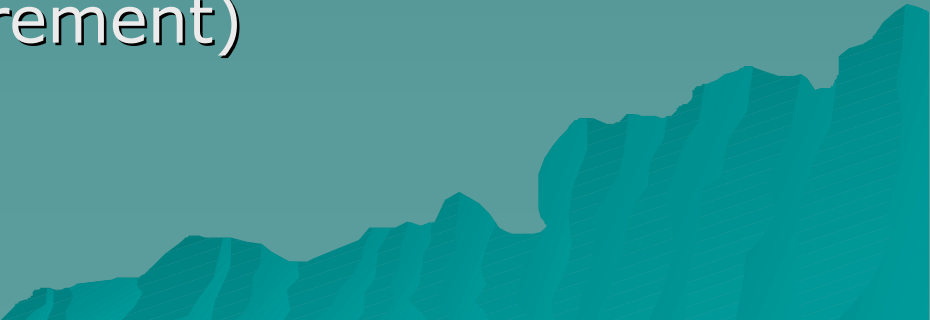


RMC Tree Regulations

- ◆ No specific incentive for tree retention
- ◆ There are minimal requirements for the protection of retained trees during construction
- ◆ No requirement for replacing required trees if they must be removed
- ◆ No requirement to maintain retained trees



Director's Rule

- ◆ Authority from RMC 4-4-130H, which says that the Development Services Director can require additional measures to retain existing vegetation
 - ◆ Requires a tree inventory of all trees 6" diameter or larger
 - ◆ 25% of all trees 8" diameter or larger must be retained and protected (some species are excluded from this requirement)
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- A stylized, dark teal silhouette of a mountain range is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, partially overlapping the text area.

Director's Rule

- ◆ Trees that cannot be retained shall be replaced at a 1:1 ratio
- ◆ Trees in critical areas and native growth protection easements are already protected by RMC and not subject to this rule
- ◆ There have been implementation challenges



Next Steps

- ◆ Continue to develop an approach for tree preservation in Renton
- ◆ Staff will prepare further materials and draft code for Planning Commission review
- ◆ Invite the public to comment on any proposed changes

The Direction Staff is Heading

- ◆ Tree retention is a priority in Renton
- ◆ Tree retention measures for new development are needed... 25% is a starting point
- ◆ Installation of new street trees should not be credited toward retention/replacement requirements
- ◆ Better tools are needed to provide incentives and enforce requirements for tree retention
- ◆ When trees are replaced (vs. retained) a stricter standard should be used for replacement
- ◆ Tree standards should address issues in new development and in existing neighborhoods

